

Cristina Nistor

Communicating with the Media

Perspectives on an Emerging Digital News Industry

Presa
Universitară
Clujeană

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WITH THE MEDIA**

**PERSPECTIVES ON AN EMERGING
DIGITAL NEWS INDUSTRY**

PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ

2016

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ISBN 978-606-37-0026-2

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Introduction

Over the last two decades media organizations and professional communication have stepped into the fascinating, dynamic and stimulating realm of the Internet that has challenged them to understand the new cyber-geography, later to identify the new media consumers and, furthermore, to structurally redesign, again and again, news stories, media strategies and communication policies.

In the new technological framework everybody can communicate and at the same time the availability and variety of information has expanded so that the boundary between good quality and poor quality information has become blurred (Krimsky, 2007). In the given context, the current book understands the process of communicating with the media as an effort to contribute to raising awareness regarding the necessity of using professional principles and tested media communication techniques when disseminating messages publicly. Because, nevertheless, media continue to be a primary source that the public turns to for insight into vital issues affecting their lives (Savrum, 2015).

In the new paradigm of communication, scholars analyze the expanding dimension of media communication focusing both on the traditional mass-media, but also on the „*minimedia*“ (Dahlgren, 2006) such as specific small groups targeted via newsletters or campaign promotion materials. Altogether, if there is one word that can summarize both Western life and the process of media, it is *speed* (Watson, 2008), therefore news *immediacy* turns out to be as important as *accuracy*. However, there are media researchers who consider that this massive exposure to information consumed via mobile devices is leading to the creation of “a second-class digital citizenship” of less informed news consumers – a more mobile public could, paradoxically, become a less informed one (Bilton, 2016).

Regarding the news media management in the digital age, scholars consider that there is a major strategic challenge to both identify and build a sustainable digital business model and strategy – therefore, if the newspapers’ previous dominance was in terms of geography and of demography, now they must focus on diversifying the value streams of their content (Graham; Greenhill, 2014).

The first chapter of the volume, titled *Considerations on Media Industry*, introduces the main changes of news media in the online communication environment as revealed by recent studies like the *Digital News Report 2016*, conducted by the Reuters Institute for Journalism from Oxford University (that surveyed online news consumers in twenty-six countries) and the *State of the News Media 2016* from the Pew Research Center,

that has examined the US media market. Further, the chapter explores the “next journalism” framework as structured by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel who have established a list of eight functions that are expected by the news consumers in the digital age. This opening section ends with an overview regarding the way in which this media shift is being reflected in the journalism education programs. *Journalism is a technologically intensive field and at the heart of journalism education is a balance of conceptual, philosophical and skills-based content*, according to the *Declaration of Principles of Journalism Education* of the World Journalism Education Congress, Singapore, 2007 (<http://wjec.ou.edu/principles.php>, accessed in 2016). This has been analyzed alongside with the *Model Curricula for Journalism Education* designed by UNESCO in 2006 and completed in 2013 that see *journalism education as an important vehicle through which the individual and institutional practices of journalists improve*. The *Computer Science and Journalism dual degree* program offered by the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University from New York is considered to be a relevant example, since *journalism classes need to be innovative in curricula design, if they are to impact on journalistic practices in the newsroom* (as declared by Jānis Kārklīņš, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information at UNESCO, during a 2013 journalism conference). The role of journalism educators also changes within the new epoch of media communication – from *a disseminator of information* the educator becomes *a learning facilitator*, helping students as they actively engage with information and materials to construct their own understanding (Terzis, 2009).

The second chapter titled *Media Relations within the Public Communication Framework* refers to the role and impact of public relations in the news-gathering process, to the impact of the media news on society, and also to the main set of new public relations skills in the digital era of communication. Today organizations explore new practices going beyond traditional media relations (Zerfass; Verčič; Wiesenberg, 2016). Therefore, classical tools of media relations like *news releases, reports, press conferences* have been supplemented by *interactive radio, television, computer networking, e-mail, blogs, podcasts, live streaming, tweets*, alongside with the results of the geometrically expansion of the communications technology (Perry; Christensen, 2015). Any efficient managerial approach includes a comprehensive communication strategy – both *internal* (addressing the organization) and *external* (the media communication plan targeting stakeholders, media institutions and the community at large). Nevertheless, in the current communication frame, the two authors previously cited agree that segmenting the audiences may require more effort and expense than the disseminating process itself. This section of the book also presents some of the main findings of the last two editions of the European Communication Monitor (2015 and 2016) that explore current practices and future developments of strategic communication among European professionals working in communication departments.

The third chapter presents an overview on *Crisis Communication Management*, including both *theoretical approaches* and *effective models of crisis communication*. Crisis management is a

challenge any organization can face and one that many fail, as explained by Timothy Coombs in his volume “Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing and Responding”. The public’s expectations during a crisis have become more and more demanding – first, citizens need accurate and complete information regarding the causes, the damages, the possible effects of the crisis, and second they definitely expect functioning systems within very short time. Therefore, for an efficient management plan for crisis situations, each public institution must include the detailed strategy for media communication – Coombs even considers that “crisis communication is the life blood of crisis management; when crisis communication is ineffective, so is the crisis management effort” (Coombs, 2015). The chapter ends with a case study on the crisis communication management of 9/11, the terrorist attacks from US, in September 11, 2001. Media coverage of crisis and the news consumption during these situations are reaching very high rates, since in spite of the new digital technology that allows almost everyone to communicate at a global scale in real time, media organizations are still the only ones that have all the necessary logistics, trained human resources and skills to gather, select, verify, produce, contextualize, comment and broadcast correct and complete information.

The closing chapter presents a *Case Study on managing the communication with media*. The author has chosen to investigate the public communication of the European Union as throughout the last years the EU administration has developed one of the

most sophisticated and complex media communication systems in the world. The European public communication system has been changing rapidly during the last years due to both new trends in traditional journalism, media consumption behavior, and also due to the euro-skepticism wave highly expressed through the 2005 French and Dutch rejection of the proposed European Union constitution. Consequently, European Union was forced to develop diverse communication tools that became generally available, addressing the wide, diverse and multicultural segments of European audiences. And it has good chances to reshape it since many consider Brexit as a political communication failure – coordinated by London and Brussels. However, communication policies of the European administration agree that citizen participation is a precondition for developing a true European democracy and, in order to get involved, EU citizens need to understand Europe and to be well informed – “the right to information and freedom of expression are at the heart of democracy in Europe” (as stated in the White Paper on a European Communication Policy from 2006, <http://europa.eu/>, accessed 2016). Following the outcome of the European communication policies, this chapter examines the European citizens’ feedback regarding their level of information on EU, together with the new news frames designed for reporting the European Union and the emerging *European Journalism* referring to media projects like Politico Europe, Euronews and others.

Over the last years, the educational and professional interests of the author have been strongly linked to the field of media communication. The present volume includes previous versions of fragments that have been published (signed as main author or as contributor) in academic journals or presented at national or international conferences. Further research may explore *Media relations and professional communicators in the digital era – challenges and practices*; *The use of Social Media in communicating with the media* or *Redefining the role of news organizations in the online communication framework*.

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ISBN: 978-606-37-0026-2